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Senate

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, the bill before us is the Amtrak reauthorization bill. Each year it seems we find ourselves fighting increasing gridlock on our highways, whether it is Iowa, Delaware, New Hampshire, or Vermont. We face growing threats of smog in our skies, polluted air, crowded conditions at our Nation's airports, and financial challenges facing our aviation industry. If we don't broaden our investment in transportation infrastructure across our Nation, we are headed for a crisis.

Each year an outfit called the Texas Transportation Institute releases something they call the Urban Mobility Report. It continues to show traffic congestion growing across our Nation in cities of all sizes, consuming more hours of the day and affecting more travelers and shipments of goods than ever before. The annual financial cost of traffic congestion has ballooned. In 1982 it was about \$14 billion; today, \$78 billion. There is a personal cost as well—the time lost to traffic.

The same Urban Mobility Report quantifies this loss at 4.2 billion lost hours. That is not commuting time. This is just sitting in traffic not going anywhere, 4.2 billion lost hours and almost 3 billion gallons of wasted fuel. That is the equivalent on the one hand of 105 million weeks of people's lives and 58 fully loaded supertankers.

Rail remains the most underdeveloped opportunity to reshape our national transportation network. Rail can efficiently move large numbers of people over moderate distances, anywhere from 100 to 400 miles, and requires a smaller right-of-way than highways.

I would also point out that to move a ton of freight from Boston, Massachusetts, to Washington, DC, takes about 1 gallon of diesel fuel. So in a time and age when we are worried about the amount of oil we are importing, 1 gallon of diesel fuel can move a ton of freight from Boston to Washington.

But with respect to corridors, this is important in densely populated areas where there is not much land available to support new infrastructure, and the land that is available is mighty expensive.

States are starting to put their own funding toward rail corridor development as well. Several are using rail to relieve congestion at airports by investing in rail service in connection with their airports, much like we have at BWI, just north of here near Baltimore, much like we have at Newark, NJ, and other places. But what they are doing is using rail service to make a connection with airports as a substitute for the spoke portion of a hub-and-spoke air journey.

Early success stories include rail service between

Boston Airport and Portland, ME, as well as increased service from the Milwaukee Airport to the Chicago region.

More and more people are taking the train in our country, and there are a variety of reasons for that. Trains are convenient, they are comfortable, they are reliable. When you ride the train, you have bigger seats, you have more leg room. You can also use the phone and access the Internet. If you want a place that is quiet, you can go to the quiet car. If you want to eat, you can go to the dining car.

Amtrak used to have an ad campaign that said: "Amtrak: The Civilized Way to Travel." Compared to some of the adventures I have had in airplanes in the last year, it surely is the civilized way to travel.

When you arrive at your destination, in many cases the train station is in the center of town as it is here; as it is in Wilmington and Philadelphia, and as it is in New York City and a lot of other places as well. On-time performance is not great, but it is on par with the airlines nationwide. But in the Northeast corridor where some of us live, the train is even more reliable. The Acela Express has an on-time performance of almost 90 percent—not 100 percent but pretty darn good.

As a result, Amtrak ridership is starting to break records. In fiscal year 2007, a record-breaking 25.8 million people rode Amtrak. Total ticket revenues increased about 11 percent over fiscal year 2006 to some \$1.4 billion; still less than the cost of running the train, but still a hefty increase.

Ridership has increased across the Nation. The Acela Express has seen a 20-percent increase over last year and the Northeast corridor's regional trains are up as well. Outside of the Northeast corridor, interestingly, the Keystone Service train, the train between Harrisburg, PA, and Philadelphia and New York, experienced about a 21-percent increase in ridership; the Chicago-St. Louis corridor, 42 percent. California's Capitol Corridor, which is a train that runs from Auburn to San Jose, is up 15 percent, and the San Diego-San Luis Obispo Pacific Surfliner is up about 9 percent. I think what we need to do is to look at those corridors to see what is working and try to apply that to a whole lot of other Amtrak lines. What we do in this bill is just that.

The Passenger Rail Investment Improvement Act would require the Federal Railroad Administration to develop performance standards to evaluate the financial performance, on-time performance, and customer satisfaction of each Amtrak train.

Amtrak is then required to establish performance

improvement plans for the five long-distance routes with their worst performance, including the worst financial performance. A year later, Amtrak must implement the plans and the Federal Railroad Administration may withhold funds for a route plan if the plan is not implemented. In future years, the remaining 10 long-distance routes would undergo the same restructuring process.

Additionally, the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act would require the Federal Railroad Administration to analyze Amtrak's routes and consider changes that would require cost recovery and on-time performance as well as address the transportation needs of communities that are not served by any other form of public transportation.

I expect when we analyze these long-distance train routes, we will find the factors that make a train—or any form of travel—appealing to travelers is the frequency, the reliability, and the travel time of that service. In the case of many of these long-distance trains, the train may only run a few days a week or at odd hours. I remember the first time my family and I—my mom, my sister, and I ever caught a train, we lived in Beckley, WV. We caught a train in a little nearby town called Prince where the train stopped. We caught the train about 3 o'clock in the morning. I was about 5 or 6 years old. We caught it at 3 o'clock in the morning. In a lot of places around the country, we have trains that are stopping at 3 o'clock in the morning, 2 o'clock in the morning, 1 o'clock in the morning, 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning. No wonder people don't want to ride those trains, especially when they show up about every 2 or 3 days. But on-time performance can be an issue because the tracks outside the Northeast corridor are not owned by Amtrak, they are owned by the railroad companies, and capacity on the freight rail lines is constrained by increasing demand to move more freight by rail. The freight is on the track. Amtrak sometimes gets in the way. The freight railroads want to move freight, not necessarily passengers. What this does is it indicates, to me at least, the need for additional investment in rail infrastructure—something we also address in this bill that is before us.

I think it is particularly remarkable how many States are investing in rail today when you consider the fact that the Federal Government provides no support. I learned when I served as Governor of Delaware that if we wanted to build in my State or to expand an airport, the Federal Government put up 80 percent of the funds—80 percent. The State would do 20. Building or expanding a highway or bridge in my State would also yield that same 80 percent support from the Federal Government. If we wanted to invest in transit, as we do, those funds were more competitive and hard to come by. The Federal Government would still pony up about 50 percent of the expense and the State would do the rest. But we wanted in my State to invest, and we do it smart, to invest in passenger rail, but that was the wisest investment for the dollar, for the buck. We got nothing from the Federal Government. The State had to put up 100 percent. Think about it. If you are the Governor of a State or you are running a State and you can get matching funds for highways,

you can get 80 percent on transit projects, 80 percent from the Federal Government for money on airports, but you can get zero for a city passenger rail service, which one would you vote for or choose? The answer I think is pretty obvious—not necessarily the right decision, the smartest decision, but oftentimes that is the decision that is made. It makes no sense.

So the Passenger Rail Investment Improvement Act bill changes that. It authorizes some \$1.7 billion over the life of this bill for a new State and capital grant program to support States that wish to provide new or improved inner city passenger rail. The Federal match is 80 percent—the same as highways, same as roads, same as airports. I believe this step will create a long-term, sustainable Federal funding mechanism for States investing in inner city passenger rail capacity, with the same kind of capital support we currently provide again for airports, highways, and transit.

Last Congress, the Senate passed the bill we have before us by a vote of 93 to 6. It was added as an amendment to an appropriations bill and passed 93 to 6. It died in conference. It was taken out, dropped. The Senate then overwhelmingly recognized the wisdom of our approach in bringing the Northeast corridor to a state of good repair, requiring reforms to the long-distance lines, allowing freight railroads to compete with Amtrak on their rail lines, the rail lines and the freights, and providing Federal support for capital rail investment, much as we do for highways, airports, and transit.

I urge my colleagues to show the same strong support for this bill when we reconvene next week so we can respond to our constituents' calls for more rail investment and more transportation options, especially where that makes sense.

Let me close, if I can, with this. Having served for 4 years on the Amtrak board, as Congressman, Senator, and Governor, being very much involved in the passenger rail service in my State and across the country, I am not interested in running trains for people who don't want to ride them. I don't think any of us are. I am not interested in the Federal Government providing inordinate subsidies for trains for folks who don't want to ride or for people who have other perfectly good options. If you think about it, in this country of ours, over half the people live within 50 miles of one of our coasts, over 50 percent of the people live 50 miles from one of our corridors. We have these densely populated corridors up and down the east coast, the gulf coast, the west coast. They were made to order for trains. Some of those long-distance trains make a lot of sense too.

A lot of businesses will pay good money, premium money for those trains. Folks will take a train south of here and go down to Orlando, put their car behind them on the train or minivan or whatever, and they pay good money for those trains. They actually make money. What we have to do is to figure out how to work differently, to meet the need that is out there, to work smarter. The legislation that is before us will do that.

I know the hour is late and you have places to go and so do I. Let me yield back the floor and I thank you all for your patience.